

help avoid such inhumanity and the warfare that is so often the result.

Thank you very much.

#### TRIBUTE TO MR. ARTHUR BENSON

##### HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 8, 2005*

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life and memory of a great Western New Yorker; businessman, community leader, and friend, Mr. Art Benson of Springville, NY. Mr. Benson was 75 years old when he died of cancer on January 21, 2005.

Art Benson was a man who held himself to the highest standard of excellence in service to his community and generosity in his personal life. He served as President of the U.S. Route 219 Association and the Springville Chamber of Commerce. In 1977, he was awarded the title "Citizen of the Year" based on his demonstration of the difference one person can make in his community. In his private life he was committed to helping others battle alcoholism with Alcoholics Anonymous.

Art's success came from his optimism, his passion for civic involvement, and his magnetic personality. He spent his youth working as a bellhop in Buffalo's Hotel Statler, befriending famous actors and politicians that came to stay. President Truman thought so highly of Art that he appointed him his personal aide during his 1948 Presidential campaign.

In his adult life, Art had a long and successful career in the auto sales business. He purchased a Ford dealership in 1965, which he sold in 1982 to become Emerling Ford and Mercury. Following the sale of his business, he worked as a sales representative for Towne Lincoln-Mercury in Orchard Park, NY.

The success that Art's work ethic and affable nature led to in the private sector brought him even more success in the public sector. A strong believer in the economic benefits that expanding U.S. route 219 would bring to western New York, politicians and development officials nicknamed Art, "Mr. 219." He was the road's most influential advocate, making public statements on its expansion even in his final days.

His leadership did not end with route 219. As president of the Springville Chamber of Commerce, he pressed for the creation of Springville's Pre-School Learning Center for the Handicapped. He was also a driving force behind the establishment of the Town of Concord Industrial Development Agency.

As I noted earlier, perhaps some of Art's greatest contributions to his community were made in his private life. A former alcoholic, Art beat the disease 37 years ago and has been a friend and counselor to other recovering alcoholics ever since. According to his son, Michael, Art would do anything in his power to help alcoholics, even when it meant leaving home in the middle of the night to offer support.

But the aspect of Art's life which made him most proud was his family. Art was the husband of the former Marie Chute, who passed

away in 2000, and is survived by his sons Michael, Arthur, Robert, and Claytus, daughters Marie Pitello, Colleen Benson, and Kathleen Benson. Arthur also leaves behind his great prides and joy—his 16 grandchildren.

Citizens of Art Benson's caliber are hard to come by. Whether it was through the gifts he was born with or his personal struggles, he consistently found ways to give to his community. Many in western New York will miss his leadership, enthusiasm, and friendship. I was proud to call Art Benson my friend and I am pleased to honor his memory today.

#### CONGRATULATIONS TO McMINN COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

##### HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 8, 2005*

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, this month, the McMinn County, Tennessee Soil and Water Conservation District will celebrate its 50th anniversary. This milestone is much more than a birthday. It is a celebration of a voluntary conservation program that has involved more than 30,000 farmers, and other land users.

This program has benefited thousands of East Tennesseans by implementing flood prevention plans, creating recreation areas, and putting many other soil conservation projects in place.

I have enjoyed working with the McMinn County Soil and Water Conservation District in the sixteen years I have served in the House. My father also worked closely with this program when he served in this seat from 1964 to 1988.

Mr. Speaker, let me again congratulate the McMinn County Soil and Water Conservation for fifty years of excellent service to east Tennessee. I have enclosed a written history of the program that I would like to call to the attention of my fellow members and other readers of the RECORD.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE McMINN COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The McMinn County Soil Conservation District was founded on December 28, 1954. The original charter members were Rex Moses, Clarence Miller, Carl D. Stager, J. G. Wilson, and J. K. Pickens.

Conservation Districts are local government subdivisions established under state law to carry out a program for the conservation, use and development of soil, water and related resources.

In 1972, The McMinn County Soil Conservation District, along with nine other sister districts, took an active part in the drive to establish the ten county Southeast Tennessee Resource Conservation and Development Districts. We met with other SCD Boards several times in making and submitting an application to the Secretary of Agriculture for and RC&D project. This project was approved and funded in September 1972. The Board asked for and received active support on this project from the County Council, City Governments, Farm Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, and others interested in the resources of McMinn County.

The Sweetwater Creek Watershed District was organized in 1958 by local landowners

with the help of the three sponsoring organizations—McMinn, Monroe, Loudon Soil Conservation Districts. A flood prevention plan for the Cities of Sweetwater and Philadelphia and all the low-lying land along the Sweetwater Creek from its origin in McMinn County to the outlet at the Tennessee River in Loudon County was completed in 1970.

Sweetwater Creek Watershed Program is a local project with technical and financial assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture. The principal problems were floodwater and sediment damage to agricultural lands, industrial, commercial and residential properties and roads. There are 37,460 acres in this watershed.

With the help of the sponsoring districts the watershed board requested funding from the three counties and the City of Sweetwater for operational and maintenance expenses in the amount of \$6,600.00 annually. Funding was provided in 1974.

Congress authorized funding for the Sweetwater Creek Watershed Project in July 1972. Without the help of the Honorable John Duncan, Sr., the project would not have been funded.

The McMinn Board of Supervisors asked the County Council to budget \$600 per year for maintenance of dams on the Sweetwater project. The council was very happy to comply with this request.

Four flood retarding structures have been completed in McMinn County, channelization for the creek in the City of Philadelphia, and 9 miles of clearing and snagging of the creek between the Cities of Sweetwater and Philadelphia. The construction on the first flood retarding structure begins in October 1975. In 1989 the fourth flood retarding structure was completed. This was the final phase of the project for federal funding. The total cost of the work was 4.6 million dollars. Benefits to the area have been substantial. The Cities of Sweetwater and Philadelphia have not been flooded since the structures were built and the channelization complete.

Every year the watershed board maintains the flood retarding structures and the channel. The retarding structures are mowed annually; any trees removed from the embankment, and eroding areas are seeded. The channel is inspected and cleared of any fallen trees, logs or trash that may cause problems. Sand bars are removed from the channel.

Benefits to the area have been substantial. The Cities of Sweetwater and Philadelphia have not been flooded since the structures were built and the channelization completed. Preventing damage to the agricultural, industrial, commercial and residential properties has saved millions of dollars.

The McMinn County Soil Conservation started Tree Day in March 1972. We gave away 10,000 white pines which were donated by Bowater. The District requested the assistance of the City of Athens to distribute the trees in 19—. Later, Arbor Day and the State Forest Service absorbed Tree Day. Citizens National Bank joined the District and City in sponsoring this event, which continues today.

The County Council requested the District assist in planning and implementing a nine-acre recreation area at the County Landfill. The District supplied tuff-cote Bermuda sprigs for the ball fields and supervised planting and land grading. The District Board assisted in three seminars on landfill operations, and site selection at the request of the County Council, for visiting county officials, schools, health departments, etc.

In 1982, the Chestnut Creek Special ACP Demonstration Area was co-sponsored by the